

We claim:

1. A method for evaluating a password proposed by a user, comprising:
receiving said proposed password from said user; and
5 ensuring that a correlation between said user and said proposed password does not violate one or more predefined correlation rules.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether that said proposed password can be qualitatively correlated with said user.
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3. The method of claim 1, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed password can be quantitatively correlated with said user.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a
15 proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be correlated with said proposed hint in a particular relation.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein said particular relation is selected from the group
20 consisting essentially of: self, family member, co-author, teammate, colleague, neighbor, community member or household member.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a
25 proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be obtained from said proposed hint.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is an identifying number.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a person in a particular relationship to said user.

5 9. The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number is a top N most commonly used identifying number.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a top N commercial entity.

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11. The method of claim 7, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies said user.

12. The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of a
15 telephone number.

13. The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of an address.

20 14. The method of claim 7, wherein said identifying number is a portion of social security number.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said proposed password is a word.

25 16. The method of claim 15, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether a correlation between said word and said user exceeds a predefined threshold.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein said correlation is determined by performing a meta-search.

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18. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further comprises the step of performing a meta-search.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further
5 comprises the step of performing a local proximity evaluation.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of ensuring a correlation further comprises the step of performing a number classification.

10 21. An apparatus for evaluating a password proposed by a user, comprising:
a memory; and
at least one processor, coupled to the memory, operative to:
receive said proposed password from said user; and
evaluate whether a correlation between said user and said proposed password
15 violates one or more predefined correlation rules.

22. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed password can be correlated with said user.

20 23. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be correlated with said proposed hint in a particular relation.

25 24. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is comprised of a proposed answer and a proposed hint and wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said proposed answer can be obtained from said proposed hint.

25. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said proposed password is an identifying
30 number.

26. The apparatus of claim 25, wherein said one or more predefined correlation rules evaluate whether said identifying number identifies a person in a particular relationship to said user.

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27. An article of manufacture for evaluating a password proposed by a user, comprising a machine readable medium containing one or more programs which when executed implement the steps of:

receive said proposed password from said user; and

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evaluate whether a correlation between said user and said proposed password violates one or more predefined correlation rules.